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Statement by the President of the Security Council

At the 5334th meeting of the Security Council, held on 20 December 2005, in connection with the Council's consideration of the item entitled "The situation in Sierra Leone", the President of the Security Council made the following statement on behalf of the Council:

"The Security Council commends the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) for its invaluable contribution over the last six years to Sierra Leone's recovery from conflict and its progress towards peace, democracy and prosperity. The Council is grateful to the Secretary-General, his Special Representatives, and all the individuals from the United Nations and from troop and police contributing countries who have made UNAMSIL a success, especially those who helped UNAMSIL recover from the crisis it faced in May 2000. The Council also deeply appreciates the cooperation extended by the Government and the people of Sierra Leone to UNAMSIL and the members of the United Nations family operating in the country.

"The Security Council notes with satisfaction the innovations in UNAMSIL's methods of operation that may prove useful best practice in making other United Nations peacekeeping operations more effective and efficient, including an exit strategy based on specific benchmarks for drawdown; an integrated mission with a Deputy Special Representative managing governance, developmental and humanitarian elements; and substantial, regular cooperation and coordination with other United Nations peacekeeping operations and offices in the region.

"At the request of the Security Council, the Secretary-General has established the new United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone in order to provide continued support to the Government as it tackles the many challenges ahead, including good governance, sustainable economic development, job creation and delivery of public services. The Government will need the sustained help of donors and development partners, particularly in addressing difficult but essential issues like security sector reform, fighting corruption, the reinforcement of governance mechanisms including the judiciary, and equal rights for women and girls. The Council therefore encourages Sierra Leone's development partners to continue their support in all these areas, and notes with satisfaction the outcome of the recent Donors' Consultative Group meeting on Sierra Leone in London.

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"With Sierra Leone now stable and at peace, the Security Council sees a great opportunity for the development of a mature and vibrant political culture. Achieving this will require tolerance, cooperation from all sides and a shared commitment to act responsibly and avoid inflammatory rhetoric. To that end, government and political leaders should reaffirm their commitment to the basic principles of democratic governance. This will pave the way for fair, transparent and peaceful elections in 2007.

"The Security Council reiterates its appreciation for the work of the Special Court for Sierra Leone and its vital contribution to reconciliation and the rule of law in the country and the subregion, and encourages all states, particularly states in the subregion, to cooperate fully with the Court and to provide it with the necessary financial resources.

"The Security Council continues to emphasize the importance of a regional approach to the countries of West Africa. The Council hopes that Sierra Leone's neighbours will intensify their cooperation, not least through the Mano River Union and the Economic Community of West African States, especially in the area of peace and security, and with the continued support of the United Nations and development partners."